

appear, one line going up the wire and the other down and sometimes they bumped and one or two roaches would fall to the table but they just leaped up onto the wire again.

I noticed this the first night I ate there but I didn't say anything because I knew that they knew I had lived in many cheap rooms full of roaches and I was supposed to be used to them but actually it made me a bit sick to look at them and I always killed them right off but down there in New Orleans I didn't say or do anything, I pretended that the roaches were fine, just there, and so what, and all that. I wanted them to print my book, they did fine work.

they never said anything about the roaches either except finally after about a week the editor said to me, "have you noticed the roaches?"

"the roaches," I answered, "oh, yeah, yeah, the roaches."

"you know," the editor said, "this other writer came by one time to eat dinner here and he saw the roaches and said, 'why in the hell don't you get rid of those damned things?'" "he did?" I asked.

"yeah, he did," said the editor's wife. the editor smiled, "I told my wife that you would never say anything about the roaches." "yeah, he did," said the editor's wife.

I let out a small belch. "forget about the roaches, you got anything to drink around here?"

that's what they wanted to hear. they had a real writer in the room with them.

the editor's wife got up to fetch the first bottle of wine for that night.

A LADY WITH SOME FRENCH WINE

I picked up the phone, answered as her voice rushed on like a quicksilver snake.

I couldn't get most of it, she just kept talking, on-rushing: "... and she claims she knows you. she's dying in a hospital and she wants you to come see her. she says her name is -----."

"I'm sorry the lady is sick," I said, "but I don't know her."

"that's what I thought. anyhow ..." she continued.

the speaker had come by to a place I had lived at many years ago, had taken some photographs of me drugged-out, mad, when I had been living with the prostitutes.

they were very good photos but others had taken some good ones

in those days when I was puking over the lip of the grave.

she went on

and I just held the phone two feet from my ear and still heard the intensity of the sound.

I looked at the rug

I looked out the window at the tops of trees remembering the days when

I had to choose between eating or using the money for stamps to send the stuff out

and I usually sided with the stamps

and when it came back I was more often than not known as address unknown.

and as far as the women were concerned I was the graceless idiot of nowhere.

I placed the phone back to my ear: "... and I know that you like German wine but I've got a good case of French wine and I'd like to come over and have a couple of bottles with you"

"I've been drinking too much," I explained, "too many people want to come by and drink with me"

"sure," she said, "I understand ... you know, Henry Miller was bothered too, he finally put a sign on his door, it said"

"I know about the sign," I said, "I read about it somewhere"

"anyhow," she went on, "Henry Miller took me to dinner a couple of times but he knew me, it was different"

"yes," I said, "of course."

"did you get my chapbook of poems?" she asked.

"yes"

"well, do me this favor"

"what is it"

"well, you know, you've probably read the poems, so what I want to ask is, if you like anything about them, about any of them, please write me and say what you like about them, o.k.?"

"o.k.," I said.

the conversation was over. I hung up.

"who the hell was that?" the woman I live with asked.

"a friend," I answered.

"a woman?"

"yes."

"well, it seems to me that when you're on the phone that long that that woman is something else beside a friend!"

she was absolutely right.

BAD TIMES AT THE 3RD AND VERMONT HOTEL

Alabam was a sneak and a thief and he came to my room when I was drunk and each time I got up he shoved me back down.

you prick, I told him, you know I can take you!

he just shoved me over again.

when I sober up, I said, I'm going to kick you all the way to hell!

he just kept pushing me around.